1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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f. Housekeeping

Every married woman has her own hearth and granary, and she works very largely alone when cooking and cleaning; but in one essential activity women who are neighbours in a village regularly co-operate, and that is in fetching firewood. We never saw a woman going alone; usually there is a group of three or four up to a dozen or more. Firewood must be fetched two or three times a week, and the journey and the collection of the wood takes from four to ten hours, depending upon the distance of the village from a patch of forest or bush. Thus the women spend up to thirty hours a week fetching wood, and it is with village neighbours that this time is spent, not with relatives from other villages. If a woman is ill her friends will help in bringing wood and cooked food for her. Some co-wives co-operate in this way, fetching wood together, and helping each other in sickness, but whether they do or not depends upon personal friendship. Often it is with an unrelated neighbour, rather than with a co-wife, that a woman works most closely. Only when co-wives are sisters, or aunt and niece, are they expected to work together regularly.

Village neighbours—women—also co-operate in the preparation of feasts, as we shall see in the following chapter.

g. Economic co-operation beyond the village

The economic relations of fellow villagers, and the changes taking place in these relations, cannot be understood without some reference to economic co-operation beyond the village boundaries. As we have already indicated, co-operation with relatives living in other villages is very important: cattle, the most prized possession of the Nyakyusa, circulate within kinship groups, between father and son, brother and brother, and between affines, and these same relatives assist one another in cultivation and building. But beyond the circle of kinsmen and village-mates there was formerly little economic co-operation. Each village and kinship group was largely self-sufficient, buying from outside little save iron spears and hoes, medicines, salt, cosmetics, and brass or copper wire for ornament.

Smiths were essential to the Nyakyusa economy for they